

REMARKS

The Examiner has rejected claim 26 under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph, due to an antecedence problem. Claim 26 has been amended to correct this error and thus Applicants respectfully request that this rejection be withdrawn.

Claims 17, 18, 20-22, 24 and 26 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Trotta in view of Erdmann. This rejection is respectfully traversed.

Trotta does not teach or remotely suggest the claimed process. Instead, Trotta describes a method of making a blade that includes the following steps: (a) extruding a honeycomb shaped uncured ceramic block; (b) slicing the block at an angle A to create the general blade shape (Figs. 2 and 4); (c) curing the ceramic material; and (d) grinding and polishing the surface of the cured ceramic to form sharpened cutting edges. There is no suggestion in Trotta of providing a wafer of single crystal material having a surface lying in a predetermined plane of the crystallographic structure. Trotta merely mentions a number of ceramics, with no suggestion that the material have a single crystal structure, much less that it have such a structure with a surface lying in a predetermined plane of the crystallographic structure. Moreover, as the Examiner acknowledges, Trotta does not teach or suggest selectively removing crystal material at the surface by employing an etching process to form a planar cutting element inclined at an acute angle to the surface plane and having a sharp cutting edge substantially at the surface plane. Finally, Trotta provides no teaching or suggestion of forming a guard element from the wafer of single crystal material by this etching process.

The Examiner asserts that it would have been obvious to replace the process described by Trotta with the etching process taught by Erdmann "to reduce the number of mechanical steps in the [Trotta] process." Applicants respectfully disagree with this assertion. Moreover, even if such a substitution were made, the claimed invention would not be obtained.

As discussed in Applicants' previous response, the "shearing blades" described by Erdmann are intended for use in electric ("electronic") shavers. As Erdmann explains, such blades (often referred to in the art as "foils") have perforations through which hairs extend during shaving. The hairs are then cut, not by movement of the blade itself, but by the

interaction of the lower, cutting surface of the blade with electrically-driven shearing knives. As a result, the cutting edges 12 of Erdmann's blades are not positioned at the surface plane (surface 2) of Erdmann's blade. Instead, they are recessed from the surface, at the bottom of each aperture.

Thus, the artisan, looking to improve upon Trotta's manufacturing method, would not have looked to Erdmann. The artisan would not have expected Erdmann's etching method to provide the sharp cutting edges that are required by Trotta's wet shaving application and that are obtained by his grinding/sharpening operation. Moreover, Erdmann's process would not form a sharp cutting edge substantially at the surface plane, as desired by Trotta and required by Applicants' claims.

Instead, it was the *Applicants* who recognized that the claimed etching process could advantageously be used to provide a blade for wet shaving. It is axiomatic that Applicants' own disclosure cannot be used as a template for hindsight reconstruction of the invention.

Claims 19 and 23 have been rejected as unpatentable over these references further combined with "applicant's admitted prior art." It is respectfully submitted that these claims are patentable for at least the reasons discussed above.

In view of the above remarks, Applicants respectfully request that the rejection under §103 be reconsidered and withdrawn.

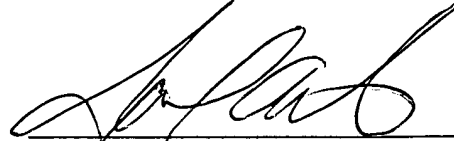
Allowance is respectfully requested. Please apply any charges or credits to deposit account 06-1050, referencing Attorney Docket No. 00216-645002.

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Respectfully submitted,

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